

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIREs) and the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SIREs. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation and to insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. SIREs. Madam Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

First, I would like to thank Chairman FRANK for moving this legislation through the committee and bringing it to the floor today.

I would also like to thank Congresswoman BIGGERT for sponsoring this legislation with me. I was happy to have such a strong proponent of consumer protection join me in introducing this bill.

We hear all types of stories about trademarks registered to a specific company being used inappropriately. In some cases, multimillion-dollar lawsuits are filed for copyright and patent infringement.

We have the same thing going on with the FDIC. Their trusted logo is being used to deceive consumers, but they have no recourse.

H.R. 2547 will allow the FDIC to levy cease and desist orders against any persons or entity that uses the FDIC's name, logo, abbreviation or any other FDIC-recognized indicator fraudulently and without the FDIC's permission. This legislation will also allow the FDIC to impose fines of up to \$1 million per day against any person or entity engaging in falsely representing the FDIC's backing of a product.

This is important consumer protection legislation that is necessary to preserve the trusted name of one of the most recognized Federal agencies. In fact, the FDIC believes this legislation is necessary to help them to continue to fight financial scams.

I ask my colleagues to support H.R. 2547.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I would like to, first of all, thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIREs) for his work on this bill, and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2547, the FDIC Enforcement Enhancement Act.

In May I was pleased to join my colleague, Congressman SIREs, in introducing this bill which gives the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation new tools to protect our constituents from financial scam artists.

After the great stock market crash in 1929 and the numerous bank closures during the Great Depression, Congress passed, in 1933, the Glass-Steagall Act, which created the FDIC. Congress created this independent Federal agency and charged it with a most important mission: To instill and maintain "the stability and the public's confidence in the Nation's financial system."

For over 70 years, the FDIC has worked to meet its mission. The FDIC's name, seal, abbreviation, and other indicators are well known, and they are symbols that the public uses to identify a financial institution or a product as being legitimate, federally insured, sound, and supervised. These are easily identifiable FDIC symbols and they can be found in a range of places, from the bank teller's window to a financial institution's Web site.

Unfortunately, over the years, criminals have taken advantage of the public's confidence in the FDIC name and used it for malicious purposes. Criminals have fraudulently used the FDIC's name to deceive consumers, most often the elderly, into saving or investing their money in a criminal's illegitimate product offered by a criminal's illegitimate financial institution.

For example, some of you may have received or known individuals who have received e-mails from these scam artists. The e-mails, that are actually from criminals, claim to be from the FDIC and request that the e-mail recipient provide highly sensitive, online banking information. However, the e-mails are fraudulent and not from the FDIC.

Current law prohibits this criminal activity, but H.R. 2547 strengthens the FDIC's enforcement powers so that it can take immediate action against criminals that are fraudulently hiding behind the good name of the FDIC and to immediately stop such criminal activity so that the consumer's money doesn't disappear.

The act allows the FDIC to enter cease and desist orders against this conduct and impose fines up to \$1 million per day on any person who falsely represents the nature of the product offered or the FDIC's insurance coverage available. In addition, the proposed legislation would clarify the FDIC's authority to seek injunctive relief against such person under the rules of any Federal, State or foreign court of competent jurisdiction.

The language of this act is similar or is identical to the act of 2005, the Financial Service Regulatory Relief, section 615, which the Committee on Financial Services approved by a vote of 67-0 in November of 2005. The House has approved this bill by a voice vote.

So I would urge my colleagues to again support the language and vote for today's bill. This bill gives the FDIC the ability to help prevent our constituents from becoming victims of financial scam artists and, like Glass-Steagall, aims to give our constituents confidence in the Nation's financial system.

Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SIREs. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIREs) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2547, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. SIREs. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE COUNCIL AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2007

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1980) to authorize appropriations for the Housing Assistance Council.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1980

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Housing Assistance Council Authorization Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. ASSISTANCE TO HOUSING ASSISTANCE COUNCIL.

(a) USE.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development may provide financial assistance to the Housing Assistance Council for use by such Council to develop the ability and capacity of community-based housing development organizations to undertake community development and affordable housing projects and programs in rural areas. Assistance provided by the Secretary under this section may be used by the Housing Assistance Council for—

(1) technical assistance, training, support, and advice to develop the business and administrative capabilities of rural community-based housing development organizations;

(2) loans, grants, or other financial assistance to rural community-based housing development organizations to carry out community development and affordable housing activities for low- and moderate-income families; and

(3) such other activities as may be determined by the Housing Assistance Council.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated for financial assistance under this section for the Housing Assistance Council—

(1) \$10,000,000 for fiscal year 2008; and

(2) \$15,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) and the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

□ 1415

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation and to insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1980, the Housing Assistance Council Authorization Act of 2007.

I introduced H.R. 1980 earlier this year. It was referred to the Committee on Financial Services. Chairwoman WATERS held a hearing on it in her Housing Subcommittee, and the committee reported it favorably to the floor to the point where we are today.

At this point I will enter into the RECORD a letter from 266 organizations in support of the Housing Assistance Council, also known as HAC.

APRIL 16, 2007.

Hon. DAVID R. OBEY,
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee,
Washington, DC.

Hon. JOHN W. OLVER,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation,
HUD, and Related Agencies, House Appropriations Committee, Washington, DC.

Hon. JERRY LEWIS,
Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee, Washington, DC.

Hon. JOE KNOLLENBERG,
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation, HUD, and Related Agencies, House Appropriations Committee, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVES: We urge you to support congressional funding for the Housing Assistance Council (HAC), a national nonprofit intermediary organization, which has been committed for more than 35 years to supporting the development of affordable housing in the nation's most rural and underserved places. HAC has an excellent record as a lender, capacity builder, and information provider and should be included in the 2008 Department of Housing and Urban Development appropriation.

We, the undersigned 266 organizations, represent vibrant, rural communities across America. Our efforts to build and sustain affordable housing for low-income rural residents are often complicated by funding cuts and capacity challenges. Throughout, HAC has been a staunch advocate, a lender, a source of information and technical advice, and a friend to rural housing providers. At times, when others have ignored rural America's needs, HAC has stood firm and kept rural issues at the forefront of the national discourse.

Congressional funding allows HAC to support rural communities and provide:

Lending. HAC has loaned more than \$217 million dollars to 1,875 organizations to develop 56,000 units of affordable housing. These loans have helped thousands of families own or rent affordable, decent homes in 49 states and the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Capacity Building Grants, Technical Assistance, and Training. HAC has raised and distributed more than \$5 million in capacity building grants to nurture over 300 local nonprofit organizations engaged in affordable

housing development. Grants, supported by technical assistance and training have a ripple effect, enabling recipient organizations to begin to sustain themselves and better serve their communities.

Research and Information. The HAC website, ruralhome.org, helps to overcome the geographical isolation that impacts many rural communities and brings up-to-date information and technical resources to often disconnected rural communities. Taking Stock and other HAC research provide objective analysis of rural housing and poverty conditions that impact more than 55 million rural residents.

With continued congressional support, HAC can sustain and expand its exceptional work in the rural communities you represent across America.

Thank you for your consideration.

Alabama: Alabama Non Profit Housing Inc., Oneonta; Ecumenical Ministries, Fairhope; Habitat for Humanity Hale County, Inc., Greensboro; HERO, Greenboro; North Glover CDC, Mobile; SE Alabama Self-Help Association, Inc., Tuskegee; Sowing Seeds of Hope, Marion.

Alaska: Alaska CDC, Palmer; Rural CAP, Anchorage.

Arizona: Comm. Action Human Resources Agency, Eloy; Emanika Associates Architects, Inc., Florence.

Arkansas: CHICOT Housing Assistance Corp., Lake Village; Crawford-Sebastian Comm. Dev. Council, Fort Smith; Delta Studies Center, State Univ.; East AR Strategic Planning Initiative, Brinkley; Eldorado Housing Authority, El Dorado; SADC, Arkadelphia; St. Francis County CDC, Forrest City; Universal Housing Development Corp., Russellville.

California: Cabrillo Economic Dev. Corp., Ventura; California Coalition for Rural Housing, Sacramento; California Housing Partnership Corp., San Francisco; California Human Dev. Corp., W. Sacramento; Center for Community Advocacy, Salinas; Comm. Hsng. Improvement Program, Chico; CHISPA, Salinas; Legal Services of Northern California, Chico; Mercy Housing, W. Sacramento; Organizacion en California de Lideres Campesinas, Pomona; National Housing Law Project, Oakland; Peoples' Self-Help Housing Corporation, San Luis Obispo; Rural California Housing Corporation, W. Sacramento; Rural Community Assistance Corp., W. Sacramento; Self Help Enterprises Inc., Visalia; Self-Help Home Improvement Project, Redding; Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indian Nation, Thermal.

Colorado: Century 21 Real Estate, Pagosa Springs; Colorado Housing, Inc., Pagosa Springs; Grand County Housing Authority, Fraser; Habitat for Humanity of Colorado, Denver; Habitat for Humanity of Montrose Cty, Montrose; Housing Justice, Denver; Housing Resources of Western Colorado, Grand Junction.

Delaware: Delmarva Rural Ministries, Inc., Dover; NCALL Research Inc, Dover.

Florida: Coalition of Florida Farmworker Orgs., Florida City; Florida Home Partnership, Inc., Ruskin; Florida Low Income Housing Associates, Inverness; Florida Non-Profit Housing, Inc., Sebring; Homes in Partnership, Inc., Apopka; Indiantown Non-Profit Housing, Indiantown; Rural Neighborhoods, Homestead.

Georgia: East Athens Development Corp., Athens; GA State Trade Assn. of Nonprofit Developers, Atlanta; Home Development Resources, Inc., Gainesville; Hsng and Econ. Leadership Partners, Inc., Athens; Ropheka Rock of the Word, Inc., Atlanta; Sams Memorial Community Econ. Dev., Darien; Seminole County Training School CDC, Donalsonville; Southwest Georgia HDC, Cuthbert; Washington Clay CDC, Atlanta.

Hawaii: Hawaii Human Dev. Corp., Honolulu; Self-Help Housing Corp. of Hawaii, Honolulu.

Idaho: Community Council of Idaho, Caldwell.

Illinois: Franciscan Ministries, Inc., Wheaton; Housing Action Illinois, Chicago; Illinois Migrant Council, Chicago; YouthBuild McLean County, Bloomington.

Indiana: Community Action of East Central IN, Richmond; Comm. Action Program of Evansville, Evansville; Heart House, Aurora.

Iowa: Northeast Iowa CAC, Decorah.

Kansas: 21st Century Homestead, Altamont; Emporia Comm. Hsng Org., (ECHO), Emporia; Interfaith Housing Services, Inc., Hutchinson; Mental Health Assoc. of the Heartland City, Kansas City; NEK-CAP, Hiawatha; New Beginnings, Inc., Hutchinson; Northwest Kansas Housing, Inc., Hill City; See-Kan Cooperative Development, Inc., Sedan.

Kentucky: Community Housing, Inc., Winchester; FAHE, Berea; Frontier Housing, Morehead; Housing Development Alliance, Hazard; Kentucky Housing Corporation, Frankfort; Kentucky Mnt Hs Dev' Corporation, Manchester; Low Income Hsng Coalition of E. KY, Prestonsburg; McCreary Cty Comm. Hsng Dev. Corp., Whitley City; Owsley County Action Team, Booneville; Partnership Housing, Inc., Booneville.

Louisiana: United for Fair Economy, Mandeville; Greater North Louisiana CDC, Jonesboro; MET—La. Housing, Hammond; Mt. Olive Waterworks District, Grambling; Project 2000, Inc., Hammond.

Maine: Bread of Life Ministries, Augusta; Coastal Enterprises, Inc., Wicasset; Community Concepts, South Paris; Rumford Group Homes, Inc., Rumford.

Maryland: Interfaith Housing Alliance, Inc., Frederick; Southern MD Tri-County CAC, Inc., Hughesville.

Massachusetts: Hilltown CDC, Chesterfield; RCAP Solutions, Gardner; Rural Development Incorporated, Turners Falls.

Michigan: Bay Area Housing, Inc., Bay City; Channel Housing Ministries, Inc., Hart; G.A. Haan L.P., Harbor Springs; Human Development Commission, Caro; Jackson Affordable Housing Corp., Jackson; Marquette County Habitat for Humanity, Marquette; NW Michigan Human Services Agency, Traverse; Northern Homes CDC, Boyne City; Saginaw County CAC, Saginaw; Washtenaw Affordable Housing Corp., Ann Arbor.

Minnesota: American Indians in Unity, Saint Paul; Becker County Housing, Fergus Falls; Grand Portage Indian Housing Authority, Grand Portage; Minnesota Housing Partnership, Saint Paul.

Mississippi: African American Cultural Society, Starkville; Central Mississippi, Inc. (CMI), Winona; Christian Housing Dev. Org., Inc., Columbus; City of Picayune, Picayune; Delta Foundation, Inc., Greenville; Esther Stewart Buford Foundation, Yazoo City; Southwest Mississippi Opportunity, Inc., McComb; West Holmes Community Dev. Org., Tchula.

Missouri: Economic Security Corp. of SW Area, Joplin; Green Hills Community Action Agency, Trenton; Missouri Valley CAA, Marshall.

Montana: Midwest Assistance Program, Lewistown; N. Cheyenne Housing Improvement Prog., Lame Deer; Neighborhood Housing Services, Great Falls.

Nevada: Rural Community Assistance Corp., Dayton.

New Hampshire: Laconia Area Community Land Trust, Laconia; NeighborWorks Greater Manchester, Manchester.

New Jersey: Crusaders CDC, Bridgeton; Mendham Area Senior Housing Corp., Mendham.

New Mexico: Centro Fuerza Y Unidad, Mesquite; City of Lordsburg, Lordsburg; Eastern Plains Housing Dev. Corp., Clovis; Greater Hidalgo Area Chamber of Comm., Lordsburg; Habitat for Humanity—Gila Region, Silver City; HELP-New Mexico, Inc., Albuquerque; Hsng Authority of the City of Las Cruces, Las Cruces; Navajo Partnership for Housing, Inc., Gallup; Santo Domingo Tribe, Santo Domingo, Pueblo; Siete del Norte, Embudo; SW Neighborhood Housing Services, Albuquerque; Supportive Housing Coalition of NM, Albuquerque; Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation, San Miguel.

New York: ADD Community Services Programs, Inc., Wappingers Falls; Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Hsng Fdn, Inc., Rochester; Cuba CDC, Cuba; Hudson Valley Housing Development Finance Corp., Wappingers Falls; NYS Rural Advocates, Blue Mtn Lake; NYS Rural Housing Coalition, Albany; Rural Development Leadership Network, Prince St. Stn; Rural Opportunities, Inc., Rochester.

North Carolina: Design Corps, Raleigh; Habitat for Humanity of Moore County, Aberdeen; Herrington Village, Ltd., Elizabeth City; Hinton Rural Life Center, Hayesville; Housing Assistance Corporation, Hendersonville; Inez Community Development Co., Greensboro; Lincoln Apartments, Inc., Durham; Moore County Habitat for Humanity, Aberdeen; Mount Sinai Homes, Fayetteville; Mountain Projects Inc., Waynesville; North Carolina Housing Coalition, Raleigh; Panola Heights Housing Dev. Corp., Tarboro; Princeville Housing Development Corp., Princeville; Robeson County CDC, Rowland; Southern Real Estate Mgmt & Cons., Durham; Telamon Corporation, Rowland, Rowland.

North Dakota: Southeastern North Dakota CAA, Fargo; Spirit Lake CDC, Saint Michael; Standing Rock Housing Authority, Fort Yates.

Ohio: Adams Brown Counties. Econ. Op. Inc., Winchester; COHHIO, Columbus; Habitat for Humanity of Morrow Cty, Mt. Gilead; Rural Appalachian Housing Dev., Glouster.

Oklahoma: Latimer County Housing Authority, Stigler; Native American Housing Services, Inc., McLoud; Tri-County Indian Nations CDC, Ada.

Oregon: CASA of Oregon, Newberg; Junction City/Harrisburg/Monroe Habitat for Humanity, Junction City; LeBanon Area Habitat for Humanity, Lebanon; Rural Collaborative, Portland; Umpqua CDC, Roseburg.

Pennsylvania: Alliance for Better Housing, Kennett Square; Columbia County Housing Corporation, Bloomsburg; Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, Glenside; Livable Hsng & Comm. Dev. Software, York; Sisters of St. Francis, Aston; Threshold Housing Development, Inc., Uniontown; Trehab, Montrose.

South Carolina: Allendale County ALIVE, Allendale; CDC of Marlboro County, Bennettsville; Lowcountry Hsng and Econ. Dev. Fdn, Charleston; United Methodist Relief Center, Mt. Pleasant.

South Dakota: Inter-Lakes Comm. Action Partnership, Watertown; Oti Kaga, Inc., Eagle Butte.

Tennessee: Affordable Housing Resources, Nashville; Buffalo Valley, Inc., Hohenwald; Carey Counseling Center, Paris; Crossville Housing Authority, Crossville; Eastern Eight CDC, Johnson City; Foothills CDC, Alcoa; Hawkins Habitat for Humanity, Rogersville; Joshua & Nehemiah Comm. Ministry, Jackson; Riverview Kansas CDC, Memphis.

Texas: Action Gypsum, LP, Houston; Amigos del Valle, Mission; Association of Rural Comm. in Texas, Austin; Comm. Council of Southwest Texas, Uvalde; CDC of South Texas, Inc., McAllen; Futuro Communities, Uvalde; Housing Plus, Inc., Harlingen; Lower Valley Housing Corp., Fabens; McAllen Affordable Homes, McAllen; Motivation, Edu-

cation and Training, Inc., Austin; Organizacion Progresiva de San Elizario, San Elizario; Paso del Norte Civil Rights Project, El Paso; Proyecto Azteca, San Juan; Self-Help Housing of East Texas, Newton; South Texas Civil Rights Project, San Juan; Texas C-BAR, Austin; Urban County Program, College Station; Walker-Montgomery CHDO, New Waverly.

Utah: Mountain Lands Comm. Housing Trust, Park City; Neighborhood Nonprofit Housing Corp., Logan; Rural Housing Dev. Corp. of Utah County, Provo.

Vermont: Brattleboro Area Comm. Land Trust, Brattleboro; Lamoille Housing Partnership, Inc., Morrisville; RNA Community Builders, Rutland; Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition, Burlington; Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, Montpelier.

Virginia: Bay Aging, Urbanna; Blue Ridge Housing Development Corp., Roanoke; Community Housing Partners Corp., Christiansburg; HOPE Community Services, Farmville; Mountain Shelter, Wytheville; Rappahannock Tribe, Inc., Indian Neck; Southeast RCAP, Roanoke; Trailview Development, Abingdon; Volunteers of America, Alexandria.

Washington: Diocese of Yakima Housing, Yakima; Homes for Islanders, Friday Harbor; Kitsap County Consolidated Hsng Auth., Silverdale; Office of Rural and Farmworker Housing, Yakima; Okanogan County CAC, Okanogan; Shelter Resources, Inc., Bellevue; WA State Farmworker Housing Trust, Bellingham; WA State Housing Finance Commission, Seattle; Whatcom Skagit Housing, Bellingham.

West Virginia: Comm. Homebuyer Investment Program, Wheeling; Harts Community Development Inc., Harts; Housing Authority of Mingo County, Williamson; Stop Abusive Family Environments, Welch; Telamon Corporation, Martinsburg; Woodlands Development Group, Elkins.

Wisconsin: America's Dream, Inc., Seymour; Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, Madison; Southeast Wisconsin Housing Corporation, Burlington; UMOs, Milwaukee.

Wyoming: Habitat for Humanity of the Greater Teton Area, Jackson.

Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank my good friend Congresswoman WATERS for working closely with me as she helped navigate this important rural housing legislation to this floor. I also want to recognize the important role her staff played in bringing this bill to the floor today. I commend Mikael Moore and Nat Thomas with Chairwoman WATERS, as well as Jeff Riley with Congressman FRANK for their time and efforts and patience and understanding while working on this important legislation. I also want to acknowledge the good work of Jaime Lizarraga.

In my capacity as chairman of the Congressional Rural Housing Caucus, I introduced H.R. 1980, the Housing Assistance Council Authorization Act of 2007, that supports rural communities' efforts to provide quality and affordable housing. It authorizes the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide the Housing Assistance Council, known as HAC, with funds for technical assistance, for training, as well as support and advice. These types of assistance will help develop the business and administrative capacities of rural community-based housing development organizations.

Also, this bill will provide the Housing Assistance Council with funds to use to make loans, grants, or provide other financial assistance for community-based housing development organizations, which will help them develop affordable housing options for low- and moderate-income families throughout rural America.

HAC will use some of these funds received as a result of this authorizing language and the appropriations process for below-market lending to local community and faith-based home builders with an emphasis on first-time low-income homeownership, particularly for minorities. When repaid, HAC will lend the funds again to new borrowers. The new capital will be used throughout rural America, including in five very high need areas: Appalachia, the Lower Mississippi Delta and Southeast, the Southwest border region, Native American areas, and migrant farm worker regions throughout the country. These are areas where property rates and housing need are very high, development capacity is very low, and conventional financing tools do not always work.

The Housing Assistance Council has extensive experience and is uniquely qualified to carry out this work. HAC's 35-year-old nonprofit loan fund, where this new capital would be used, has lent over \$220 million during their existence to nearly 1,900 organizations to develop almost 60,000 homes, and the fund has a loss rate of less than 1 percent. Madam Speaker, these loans have helped thousands of families own or rent affordable, decent homes in 49 States and the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, and has helped Proyecto Azteca in my congressional district. It is important to note that HAC is the only national assistance organization devoted solely to rural housing and community development.

Madam Speaker, 20 percent of our Nation's population lives in rural communities; yet far too many of these families live in conditions that are poor, inadequate, or run-down. This bill will go a long way towards improving the overall quality of life of rural Americans by providing them with the resources they need to improve the quality of housing in rural America.

In conclusion, I want to thank again Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS and Chairman BARNEY FRANK for their support for this important legislation and for bringing this bill to the floor for a vote today.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PEARCE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today to support H.R. 1980, the Housing Assistance Council Authorization Act of 2007, and would like to compliment the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) for his work on this and also Chairwoman WATERS for bringing this important initiative for rural communities to the floor today.

This legislation recognizes the work of the Housing Assistance Council in providing housing opportunities for low-income families in rural communities, and most of the Second District is rural communities in New Mexico. There are many others across this country, but we feel the direct impact in New Mexico.

Although HAC has received funding through HUD appropriations since the early 1980s, the program has never been authorized. This bill would formally authorize assistance councils, which is important to ensure the continued success of the program and long-term goal of aiding individuals in low-income housing.

The Housing Assistance Council is unique in nature and the only nonprofit designed to help improve rural housing. HAC should be particularly praised for its work on self-help housing initiatives, which promote personal stability and financial responsibility for low-income housing.

Again I want to thank my colleagues for acknowledging the Housing Assistance Council's important contribution to affordable housing for rural communities, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, I want to yield 5 minutes to my good friend the gentleman from New Hampshire, Congressman PAUL HODES, who has already made a mark in Congress during his first year in office.

Mr. HODES. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1980.

Rural poverty is a particularly harsh brand of indigence. It tends to be more extreme than urban poverty, and because it develops in areas far from television cameras and daily newspapers, to most people in this country, rural poverty is faceless. But its presence and its consequences are very real, and they present formidable challenges to both our country and our conscience.

In my own home State of New Hampshire, we have largely a rural State. Our cities by some measures are hardly cities. They are large towns. And while we are known for the beauty of our mountains and our lakes and our tourist economy as well as our high tech economy, there are pockets of intransigent rural poverty throughout our State. In the far north the rate of poverty is much higher than it is in most other places in the State, and generally the poverty rate in rural areas of the country is 14.6 percent, which tops that of most urban areas.

People who are living in rural poverty face numerous challenges. Inaccessibility of housing with high rents. In New Hampshire the average price for an apartment for a family of four is now \$1,000, and this is at a time when folks who are living in rural areas are facing a softer economy and gas prices which are rising, and the challenge of

finding a decent place to live for people who live in rural areas is a powerful challenge. People who live in rural areas are farther from basic services. They are less likely to take advantage of them.

There is a desperate need in parts of our country, including my own State. And as the people's House, we have a moral imperative to help children and parents trapped in destitution.

H.R. 1980 and H.R. 1982, which will come to the floor later, are compassionate, responsible bills which encourage the development of low- and moderate-income housing in our most stricken areas. There is no doubt, because I have seen it with my own eyes on numerous occasions at home, that a clean, safe place to live is often the first step on the road to self-sufficiency. We are not talking about handouts. Encouraging economic development in poor areas helps create jobs and a solid tax base, which build toward self-sustaining prosperity.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 1980 and its companion 1982 are wise, compassionate investments in our country's future. I urge my colleagues to support their passage.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this important bill.

Mr. PEARCE. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This legislation is very important to many parts of Texas. As you know, when they redrew the lines of the Congressmen in Texas, I was given a 375-mile-long geographic area that had 90 communities. The greatest majority, 90 percent, were small rural communities who were asking when is Congress going to recognize the great need that we have for housing assistance?

And I want to give you just one example of the route that I mentioned, Proyecto Azteca, which is one where people build their own homes. They provide the labor to build those homes with the supervision of some professional supervisors in construction of residential homes. The only assistance that we give them is the purchasing of the materials, the building materials, which amounts to about \$30,000. And I wish you could see these homes. I wish you could see the fine work that is done in these three-bedroom, one-bath homes that many have been built in our area with this type of assistance.

So I give this example because there are many serving in Congress who have never visited colonias like those that are in some parts of the southwestern part of the United States.

So I say that this type of legislation is something that is going to go a long ways in helping provide many, many more affordable homes.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1980, the Housing Assistance Council Authorization Act of 2007.

This bill authorizes \$10 million for the Housing Assistance Council, HAC, in Fiscal Year

2008 and \$15 million in Fiscal Years 2009–2014. HAC, a nonprofit corporation, is the only national intermediary focused solely on the tremendous affordable housing needs of rural areas and small towns.

HAC assists in the development of both single-family homes and multi-family housing, and promotes homeownership for working low-income rural families. HAC maintains a special focus on high-need groups and regions: Indian country, the Mississippi Delta, farm workers, the Southwest border colonias, and Appalachia. In just the past 8 years, HAC has provided over \$105 million in aid to hundreds of organizations in 160 Congressional districts. Since inception in 1971, HAC has helped build 60,000 affordable homes in 49 states and 2 territories.

The funds authorized by H.R. 1980 will allow HAC to continue successfully assisting a national network of rural nonprofit, public and for profit builders. Specifically, HAC could continue providing grants, loans, technical assistance, training, and other support to build the capacity of rural community-based housing development organizations to create and sustain safe affordable housing. The bill also enables HAC to offer vital help to specific housing projects and initiatives these groups undertake.

I am especially pleased that this funding will enable HAC to bring its expertise to bear on the problem of rural homelessness. While my District does not encompass rural areas, it does have as many as 10,000 persons on any given night. And though it may not seem so at first blush, homelessness in central Los Angeles is related to rural homelessness.

Specifically, in the absence of an adequately resourced network of housing and service providers in their home communities, poor rural folks who fall into homelessness often leave their family and social networks and move to larger urban areas in the hope of finding jobs, housing, and social services.

While migrating from the countryside to the city, and vice versa, is an important and time-honored American tradition, these vulnerable households—often with few skills and suffering from disabilities or chronic health problems—too often experience homelessness again in the destination city. There, they enter public and private systems of care already stressed to the breaking point—as tragically exemplified by a recent “60 Minutes” story on so-called “hospital patient-dumping” in Los Angeles.

H.R. 1980 will enable HAC to help interrupt this tragic cycle, by building the capacity of their network of housing developers and social service providers to care for the homeless and at-risk in their own hometowns—where they are most likely to escape homelessness and re-enter the economic mainstream.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1980.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. PEARCE. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1430

RURAL HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2007

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1982) to authorize appropriations for the rural housing and economic development program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1982

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Rural Housing and Economic Development Improvement Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. RURAL HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE.

(a) *USE.*—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development may carry out a program, through the Office of Rural Housing and Economic Development, to provide assistance to Indian tribes, State housing finance agencies, State community or economic development agencies, local nonprofit organizations and community development corporations in rural areas to support innovative housing and economic development activities in rural areas.

(b) *REQUIREMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNT NUMBER FOR ASSISTANCE.*—As a condition of initial or continuing assistance under any housing or economic development activity that is provided assistance with amounts made available under this section, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall require that each member of a family so assisted (or of a family applying for such assistance) who is 18 years of age or older or is the spouse of the head of household of such family, shall have a valid social security number.

(c) *AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.*—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for assistance under this section—

- (1) \$30,000,000 for fiscal year 2008; and
- (2) \$40,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) and the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation, and to insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1982, the Rural Housing and Economic Development Improvement Act of 2007.

I introduced H.R. 1982 earlier this year. It was referred to the Committee

on Financial Services. Chairwoman MAXINE WATERS held a hearing on it in her Housing Subcommittee, and the committee reported it favorably to the floor to the point where we are today.

At this point, I would submit for the RECORD a statement of the National Association of Realtors in support of the Rural Housing and Economic Development Improvement Act.

STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS TO THE HOUSE FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY HEARING RURAL HOUSING PROGRAMS: REVIEW FISCAL YEAR 2008 BUDGET AND PENDING RURAL HOUSING LEGISLATION—MAY 9, 2007

Nearly 20% of the U.S. population live in non-metropolitan areas. Housing conditions in rural areas are generally worse than in urban or suburban neighborhoods. Federal rural housing programs are instrumental in providing affordable housing opportunities to low- and moderate income rural renters and homebuyers. The National Association of REALTORS® strongly supports federal housing programs that target rural communities and provide sufficient federal assistance needed to meet the housing needs of rural communities.

Many of our rural citizens face a serious housing crisis. Nearly all of the counties with the highest poverty rates in America are rural. As a result, access to an adequate supply of safe, affordable rental units, mortgage financing and housing assistance is especially important in these areas. Approximately 1.9 million rural renters have housing problems; the majority of these renters are spending more than 30% of their incomes for housing. These areas also generally have fewer mortgage lenders competing in the marketplace, a factor that raises the cost of home mortgages.

FY2008 budget proposals

The President's FY2008 budget proposal for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Housing Service (RHS) reflects a preference for loan guarantees and vouchers to provide low income rental housing. The President's budget proposal eliminates funding for the Section 502 single family direct loan program, while increasing funding for the Section 502 single family guaranteed loan program by 32%. Similarly, the proposal would eliminate funding for the Section 515 multifamily direct loan program (which provides loans to developers of affordable rental housing), while doubling funding for the Section 538 multifamily guaranteed program. Lastly, the budget proposes to increase from 2 to 3 percent, the guarantee fee on new 502 loans.

While NAR's members understand and support programs like loan guarantees that leverage available funds, we also believe that direct loan programs are also very important. In many rural communities, the Section 502 direct loan program is the only housing assistance available. Section 502 homeownership direct loan program loans are used primarily to help low income households purchase homes. They can be used to build, repair, renovate, or relocate homes, and to purchase and prepare sites, including providing water and sewage facilities. These loans may also be used to refinance debts when necessary to avoid foreclosure or when required to make necessary house repairs affordable. We strongly support the availability of sufficient federal assistance to ensure the Section 502 direct loan program responsibly addresses the housing needs of low and moderate income rural families.

Rental housing is also a critical need in rural communities. Approximately 7.8 million people in non-metropolitan areas in the U.S. are poor. Section 515 Rural Rental Housing Loans are direct, competitive mortgage

loans made to finance affordable multifamily rental housing units for very low-, low-, and moderate-income families, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities. Since its inception in 1962, the Section 515 program has provided more than half a million decent rental homes affordable for the lowest income rural residents. We urge Congress to restore construction funding for the Section 515 program eliminated in the President's FY2008 budget so as to enable low-income rural families to find decent, safe, and affordable housing.

We also strongly oppose the proposed increase in the guarantee fee on 502 loans. Increasing the fee will mean that rural low- and moderate-income families will have to pay more for the opportunity to become homeowners. This may cause some families to become ineligible for a mortgage.

Pending rural housing legislation

The National Association of REALTORS® also supports H.R. 1982, the "Rural Housing and Economic Development Improvement Act of 2007", introduced by Rep. Hinojosa (D-TX). This bill would authorize the Rural Housing and Economic Development program at HUD that provides assistance to states and localities for housing and economic development activities in rural communities. The program provides limited funding on a competitive basis to community groups including local rural non-profits, community development corporations, housing finance agencies (HFAs), and economic development agencies. The funding may be used for capacity building and similar support for housing and economic development projects in areas with a population of less than 20,000. This program has been operating successfully at HUD but has not been authorized. HR 1982 would simply authorize the program and deserves Congressional support.

Conclusion

In closing, the National Association of REALTORS® appreciates this opportunity to comment on the needs for rural housing. We thank the Subcommittee for its attention to rural housing, and we urge your strong support of our policy and funding recommendations to improve rural housing opportunities.

Madam Speaker, 20 percent of our Nation's population lives in rural communities, yet far too many of these families live in conditions that are poor, inadequate or run down. To address these horrendous conditions, I co-founded and currently chair the Congressional Rural Housing Caucus. The goal of the caucus is to improve the availability, affordability and quality of housing in rural America.

H.R. 1982 provides \$30 million for the Rural Housing and Economic Development, known as the RHED, program respectively for fiscal year 2008, and \$40 million for fiscal years 2008 throughout the year 2013.

I believe this legislation will go a long way towards accomplishing the goals of the Congressional Rural Housing Caucus.

The Rural Housing and Economic Development program provides for capacity building at the State and at the local level for rural housing and economic development, and to support innovative housing and economic development activities in rural areas.